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ABSTRACT

As part of the work from the Content Area Reading Project (CARP), which focuses on inservice teacher education in content area reading, this paper examines eight premises for the training of administrators in the clinical supervision of content area teachers. These premises are as follows: (1) problems in content classrooms can be resolved if teachers change their behaviors in positive ways; (2) recognition of needed change must come from within, as change cannot be imposed from without; (3) content area teachers are often unaware of many teaching and learning behaviors that occur in their classrooms; (4) increased awareness of teaching and learning behaviors in the classroom can help content teachers recognize needed changes; (5) existing teaching and learning behaviors can be revealed to content area teachers through systematic observation; (6) teachers cannot easily apply systematic observation techniques while teaching, so trained observers are needed; (7) observers must present results to teachers in such a way that the teachers accept the results as valid, internalize them, and use them to identify necessary instructional changes; and (8) teachers will accept and internalize observation results best when there is a "no threat" relationship between teachers and supervisors. (RL)

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Inservice Training of Administrators in the Supervision of Content Area Reading Teachers

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This paper is one of a series of three presented at the second annual conference of the American Reading Forum. It examines eight premises for the training of administrators in the clinical supervision of content area teachers and is based upon five workshops offered in a Pennsylvania school district as part of the Content Area Reading Program(CARP).

While the primary focus of the Content Area Program, supported by an ESEA Title IV-C grant, was a series of workshops designed for content teachers of grades 4 through 10, administrative personnel were trained in clinical supervision and systematic observation. This training was designed to help supervisors and administrators facilitate the implementation of CARP objectives by content teachers. While participating in the five half-day workshops, the seven principals, two teachers, and five administrators generated observation instruments that could be used in content classrooms.

A model, the Instructional Supervision Process, developed by Boyan and Copeland (1978) was adapted for use with project administrators. The model, grounded in the belief that the supervision process must be based upon a colleagial supervisor-teacher relationship, is designed to facilitate teacher self-improvement. Rather than a model for teacher evaluation, it is a practical model for face-to-face clinical supervision. Eight premises, crucial to such a model, guided the design and implementation of the five workshops. These eight premises form the body of this paper.

Many problems encountered in the content classroom can be resolved if the teacher changes his or her behavior in positive ways. Content teachers, frustrated with an ever increasing number of factors over which

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they have no control, often fail to recognize the influence of their behavior on the actions of students. Peer group pressure, experiential background, reading ability, preconceptions, home environment, and physical characteristics have a tremendous influence on students' classroom behavior and remain beyond the control of the content area teacher. However, the teacher does have control of his or her own behavior. In effect, many difficulties encountered as content teachers attempt to incorporate the teaching of reading skills into their content field, can be overcome by a change in teaching behavior. The content teacher's behavior is the instructional factor which the teacher can come to know best and over which the teacher can exercise the most control.

Recognition of needed change in behavior must come from within, not be imposed from without. Supervisors and administrators have traditionally had difficulty in addressing the need for change. The content teacher will not quickly integrate the teaching of reading skills into his or her content area if it is imposed by an administrator or supervisor. Commitment to change in behavior must be personally felt and must be affirmed for its worth. This is especially true for the insecure content teacher or the content teacher skeptical of the role of reading skill development in his or her content classroom.

Content teachers are often unaware of many teaching and learning behaviors which occur in their classrooms. Jackson (1968) illustrated that even good teachers, when interviewed, express unawareness of some of their classroom behaviors and are upset by their inability to monitor their behavior. Three reasons seem to account for this lack of awareness: too much happens too rapidly in the classroom, teachers are seldom equipped with the specific skills necessary for labeling classroom behavior, and it is too difficult to systematically observe while teaching. The content teacher, primarily concerned with management, evaluation of student responses, and communicating content material, is seldom able to effectively monitor his or her own bwhavior.

Differential treatment of high- and low-achieving students is an

area where this unawareness is common in content classrooms. Rowe (1969) and Brophy and Good (1970) found through systematic observation that teachers gave up on low-achieving students who had difficulty responding to questions. However,at the time they gave up on the students, the teachers did not consider this to be giving up. Expressing embarrassment over the silence and assuming that the low-achieving students were also embarrassed, the teachers rushed forward to keep the discussion rolling. Teachers were giving low-achieving students less time to respond and thereby making a response more difficult. All of this took place without the teachers being aware of their behavior.

Increased awareness of teaching and learning behaviors in the classroom can help content teachers recognize needed changes. While much inappropriate teaching occurs because teachers are unaware of their behavior, when given specific information, teachers use that information to change their behavior and improve instruction. This is especially true if the teachers' participation is voluntary. Pambookian (1976), McNeil (1971), and Martin (1973) have shown that teachers are most likely to change when provided with information that shows a discrepancy between what they want to do and what they are doing. The goal of integrating the teaching of reading skills into the content classroom must be important to the content teacher. If the teacher finds that attention to reading skills and the reading process helps the child master the content, change is possible. In a similar manner, if a supervisor can help the content teacher identify teaching behaviors which actually inhibit the child's ability to read and understand content material, change is possible.

Existing teaching and learning behaviors can be revealed to the content teacher through systematic observation. To alter the content teacher's behavior, that teacher must be able to see what is taking place in the classroom. While observation does not automatically improve instruction, when conducted by competent persons who have a systematic method for looking into classrooms, content teachers can receive the type of feedback which can improve instruction. Eash and Rasher (1977) illustrate that an inservice program can be aided by classroom observation when the observation is specific and revolves around behavior that is of interest

to the teachers.

Because it is difficult for the content teacher to apply systematic observation techniques while teaching, a trained observer is needed. Typically teachers receive information about what occurs in the classroom in a limited number of ways: student generated feedback, peer observation, self-evaluation, videotaping, and observation by a supervisor or administrator. While student feedback is useful, children are unable to objectively and systematically observe the complex interactions that occur in a classroom.

Peer observation is threatening to most teachers and presupposes that fellow teachers have both the time and the observation skills required for systematic observation. While videotaping seems to be an ideal way for teachers to objectively observe classroom interaction, the research indicates that it is effective only if specific teaching behaviors are highlighted and discussed (Fuller and Manning, 1973; Peck, 1971; Baker, 1970). Unless the content teacher knows what to look for and how to observe, they are unlikely to see very much. The behavior revealed through videotaping is just as rapid and complex.

Self-evaluation is equally difficult. Teachers, as has been illustrated, are too involved in the teaching process to think about what they are doing. They have little training in systematic observation and are frequently unaware of their own behavior. While students, peers, videotapes, and self-analyses are potentially useful to a teacher, the trained observer is the logical source for information regarding classroom behavior.

The observer must present the observation results to the content teacher in a way that will allow the teacher to accept them as valid, to internalize them, and to use them to identify needed instructional changes. The traditional subjective and evaluation-laden process of supervision frequently prevents content teachers from accepting and internalizing observation results. While the literature in supervision over the last two decades has advocated a colleagial supervisor-teacher relationship and has identified equal participation by the teacher as a crucial factor in the

supervision process (Cogan, 1972; Goldhammer, 1969; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1979), the research also indicates that teachers often perceive themselves as ignored subordinates. Walker (1976) in a survey of 113 Georgia teachers, found that teachers perceived supervisors as having little respect for teachers' opinions. Supervisors were also seen as unavailable to teachers, deficient in listening skills, and unconcerned for individual differences.

The research has revealed that teachers generally perceive the supervisor as either threatening and authoritarian or a nonentity and out of touch with classroom reality. Heald (1969) notes a comprehensive study conducted by the National Education Association (NEA) which is representative of this research. The NEA study, published in 1964, involved 600 superintendents, 800 principals, and 1000 teachers. While the supervisors perceived evaluation as valuable for the improvement of instruction, over one-half of the teachers reported that the written evaluations of their work resulted in no observable changes in behavior.

The NEA survey further reported that superintendents were the most confident of the capacity of evaluation programs to improve the quality of teaching, but teachers were the least confident. The percentage of principals who believed that evaluation programs stimulated teachers to improve instruction was nearly twice as high as the percentage of teachers who believed that improvements followed evaluation. When teachers perceive the supervisor and the supervision process to be ineffectual, it is unlikely that they will internalize the results of observation data.

The teacher will accept and internalize observation results best when there is a "no threat" relationship between the teacher and the supervisor. The discrepancy between teachers' perceptions of the supervision process and those of administrators is due, in part, to the threat generated by a supervisor in a evaluative role. Withholding tenure or dismissing a tenured teacher may be infrequent personnel actions but they become involved in the teachers' view of a principal or supervisor. There is a critical and obvious conflict between the evaluation of teachers on the one hand and stimulating professional growth on the other. Differentiating supervision to improve instruction from administration and evaluation presents a significant challenge to supervisors of content teachers.

Cogan (1976) suggests that most of what is today called supervision is heavily weighted toward general supervision, the administration of supervision, and the rating of teachers. Babcock (1965), stating the generally held view of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), suggests that this view must change. He describes supervision as a service rather than an administrative function. "We have long recognized that the supervision of instruction in the classroom should be removed from the 'authority' role. It should be removed as far as possible from the 'line-staff' relationship."

While Cogan (1976) concedes that public school supervisors are frequently charged with the responsibility for the management of programs and the rating of teachers, he contends that these roles appear to hold so much threat that it "deforms the supervisor's relationship with the teacher." The confusion of the management and rating roles with the improvement of instruction role is due to the distribution of supervisory functions among administrators and teachers and the acceptance of administrative functions by supervisors (Lucio and McNeil, 1979).

In an editorial , Unruh (1977) urges that supervision is at "a critical moment in history." Supervisors, she contends, must either rise to the challenge of leadership or lose their function to other individuals or agencies. If Unruh is correct, supervisors may begin to meet this challenge by differentiating the roles of evaluator and supervisor. The workshops conducted for Content Area Reading Program administrators were built upon the preceding premises and focused on face-to-face encounters. The role of the supervisor is not that of an evaluator. The content area teacher performs a central role in this type of supervision. Supervision becomes something that is done together; content teacher and supervisor share the expert role.

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